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SECRET

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REF: A. STATE 128939 B. SAIGON 16463

FOR THE SECRETARY FROM LODGE

1. THANKS FOR YOUR VIEWS ON OUR PRELIMINARY ANALYSIS OF THE PROBLEMS AND POSSIBILITIES FOR VIET NAM AS IT APPROACHES CONSTITUTIONAL GOVERNMENT AND PRESIDENTIAL ELECTIONS. WE MUST CERTAINLY REACH FULL UNDERSTANDING SO THAT WE MAY SPEAK WITH ONE VOICE AND MAKE THE MOST OF SUCH CAPACITY AS WE HAVE TO INFLUENCE POLITICAL TRENDS. EMBASSY OFFICERS AND I CONSTANTLY AND CRITICALLY SCRUTINIZE THEM AND WE HAVE NOT YET MADE UP OUR MINDS FINALLY ON ANY OF THE QUESTIONS DISCUSSED IN OUR EXCHANGE OF CABLES. FOLLOWING ARE OUR CURRENT VIEWS:

2. WE AGREE THAT A GENUINE SHARING OF POWER BETWEEN THE MILITARY AND THE CIVILIAN POLITICAL LEADERS IS REQUIRED. LONG TERM GROWTH AS WELL AS PRESENT STABILITY ARE DEPENDENT ON A WEDDING OF MILITARY WITH CIVILIAN POWER AND INTERESTS.

3. IN THIS CONNECTION IT SHOULD BE REMEMBERED THAT, PROPERLY SPEAKING, THERE ARE NO REAL POLITICIANS IN VIETNAM (MEN WITH IN-DEPTH GRASS ROOTS ORGANIZATION IN THE COUNTRYSIDE); THAT IT WILL TAKE TIME TO BREED SUCH MEN; AND THE ARMY HERE NOT ONLY HAS A MILITARY SIDE (WHICH OURS HAS) BUT A KEYSTONE PART TO PLAY IN THE SOCIAL STRUCTURE AS THE DOMINANT NATION-BUILDING INFLUENCE IN VIETNAM (WHICH OURS HASN'T).

4. WE ALSO AGREE THAT A NEW, MORE BROADLY BASED GOVERNMENT REQUIRES THE INFUSION OF SOME CIVILIAN ELEMENTS INTO THE EXECUTIVE BRANCH AND AN ELECTED LEGISLATURE SHOULD AT LEAST HAVE SOME DEGREE OF INFLUENCE ON THE EXECUTIVE. WE ARE USING OUR INFLUENCE TO BRING THIS ABOUT.

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5. IN SPEAKING OF THE ROLE OF THE MILITARY, WE PERHAPS PUT TOO MUCH EMPHASIS ON THEIR MILITARY POWER AND TOO LITTLE ON THE FACT THAT THE MILITARY IS IN MANY RESPECTS THE MOST EXPERIENCED, COHESIVE AND RELIABLE OF THE NATION BUILDING FORCES IN THIS COUNTRY. THERE WOULD BE NO "REPUBLIC OF VIETNAM" WITHOUT IT. MILITARY MEN OF ALL GRADES HAVE NOW HAD EXTENSIVE EXPERIENCE IN CIVIL ADMINISTRATION. SOME HAVE DONE BADLY, BUT OTHERS HAVE DONE REMARKABLY WELL AS DISTRICT AND PROVINCE CHIEFS AND AS MINISTERS IN THE CENTERAL GOVERNMENT. FEW CIVILIANS IN THIS COUNTRY, FOR EXAMPLE, COULD MATCH THE COMPETENCE AND DEVOTION OF GENERAL THANG AS HEAD OF THE REVOLUTIONARY DEVELOPMENT MINISTRY. WHAT UNITY AND POLITICAL STRENGTH THERE IS AT THIS TIME IN A COUNTRY WHICH BADLY LACKS BOTH COMES LARGELY FROM THE UNITY AND STRENGTH OF THE MILITARY ESTABLISHMENT.

6. THE ABOVE IS TRUE AS MUCH OR MORE LOCALLY AS NATIONALLY. NOT ONLY ARVN, BUT THE RF AND PF HAVE A VITAL ROLE TO PLAY IN THE MILITARY-CIVILIAN PARTNERSHIP WE ARE HOPING TO SEE FORGED. AS ARVN BECOMES MORE AND MORE INVOLVED IN ITS NEW RD ROLE; IT WILL BECOME MORE AND MORE ENMESHED IN THE LOCAL POLITICAL SITUATION. LOCAL ELECTIONS FOR HAMLET AND VILLAGE OFFICIAL WILL STRENGTHEN LOCAL CIVILIAN POLITICAL LEADERS AT THE SAME TIME THAT THE ARMY IS UNDERTAKING ITS MILITARY-POLITICAL DRIVE TO ROOT OUT THE VIET CONG INFRASTRUCTURE IN THE HAMLETS AND VILLAGES. THE ELECTED OFFICIALS WILL NEED THE ARMY AND THE ARMY WILL NEED THE LOCAL CIVILIAN POLITICAL LEADERS.

7. THUS, WE ARE NOT THINKING IN TERMS OF THE NEED TO CONTROL THE MILITARY. WE ARE THINKING IN TERMS OF THE VALUABLE SKILLS WHICH THE ARMY CAN BRING TO THE MILITARY-CIVILIAN PARTNERSHIP. WE ALSO THINK OF THE SERIOUS DANGER IN NOT IMPOSING HEAVY OBLIGATIONAL DUTIES ON THE MILITARY AS THE STRONGEST ENTITY IN THE COUNTRY. SURELY NOTHING COULD BE MORE IMPRUDENT THAN TO LEAVE THEM OUT IN THE COLD WITH NO DUTIES. AN OVERTHROW OF THE GOVERNMENT WOULD SOON RESULT.

8. A MUCH GREATER DEGREE OF CIVILIAN PARTICIPATION IN THE NEW GOVERNMENT DOES NOT NECESSARILY MEAN A GOVERNMENT DOMINATED BY CIVILIANS. IN FACT IN THE EARLY YEARS OF THE CIVILIAN-MILITARY PARTNERSHIP FOR WHICH WE HOPE IT MAY BE BEST IF THE MILITARY IS THE

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SENIOR PARTNER. THIS IS BECAUSE, AMONG OTHER THINGS, VIET NAM IS AT WAR AND THERE IS A NEED FOR MILITARY COMPETENCE AT THE HIGHER LEVELS. IT IS ALSO BECAUSE THE MILITARY ARE NOT PSYCHOLOGICALLY PREPARED FOR A "CIVILIAN COUP" OF THE TRI QUANG TYPE. MOREOVER, THE CIVILIANS DO NOT HAVE THE ORGANIZATION AND THE UNITY TO MAKE SUCH AN ABRUPT SHIFT IN POWER REALLY WORK. A TOO ABRUPT MOVE TOWARD COMPLETE CIVILIAN CONTROL MIGHT WELL HAVE VERY BAD EFFECTS ON ARVN MORALE. IT COULD ALSO GIVE US A GOVERNMENT WHICH, THOUGH CIVILIAN, WOULD BE FAR LESS EFFECTIVE POLITICALLY AS WELL AS ADMINISTRATIVELY THAN WHAT WE NOW HAVE. ALTHOUGH THE NEW INSTITUTIONS WILL HOPEFULLY MOVE VIET NAM A LONG WAY TOWARD A GOVERNMENT OF LAW, PERSONAL RELATIONSHIPS WILL BE IMPORTANT HERE AS THEY ARE IN THE US GOVERNMENT. IF THE MILITARY IS TOO DRASTICALLY CUT OUT OF THE PYRAMID OF PERSONAL RELATIONSHIPS, WE COULD SEE SOMETHING OF THE SAME KIND OF COLLAPSE AS THAT WHICH HAPPENED WHEN THE MILITARY WERE EXCLUDED UNDER PRIME MINISTER HUONG.

9. I WOULD FEAR THE POSSIBILITY OF ANOTHER MILITARY COUP IF THE MILITARY WERE TOO BRUSQUELY PUSHED ASIDE. WE MUST NOT OVERLOOK THE PRIDE AND THE AMBITIONS OF OFFICERS LIKE THE BABY TURKS WHOM KY IS FOND OF TALKING ABOUT. THERE ARE A REAL FACTOR. THE EVENTS OF LAST SPRING MAY BE READ AS A LESSON ON THE ABSOLUTE NEED FOR CONTROL OF THE MILITARY. IT WAS BECAUSE KY LOST CONTROL OF SOME OFFICERS AND MEN IN HUE AND DANANG THAT THE "STRUGGLE" BECAME SUCH A TREAT TO THE REGIME. WITHOUT DISSIDENT MILITARY PERSONNEL, THE "STRUGGLE" IN DANANG AND HUE WOULD HAVE BEEN DISPOSED OF AS EASILY AS THE SAIGON "STRUGGLERS".

10. THE EMPHASIS THEREFORE MUST NOT BE ON REDUCING MILITARY PARTICIPATION IN POLITICS BUT RATHER ON USING OUR INFLUENCE ON THE MILITARY TO GET THEM TO ACCEPT A GENUINE SHARING OF POWER AND RESPONSIBILITY WITH THE CIVILIAN POLITICIANS. IN MY DISCUSSIONS WITH KY AND THIEU, I GO OVER THIS GROUND AT EVERY OPPORTUNITY, AS YOU SUGGEST. I STRESS NOT ONLY THE NECESSITY FOR AN ABSOLUTELY CLEAN ELECTION AND COMPLETE MILITARY ACQUIESCENCE IN THE RESULTS OF THAT ELECTION, BUT ALSO THE IMPORTANCE OF UNITY OF THE ARMY AND OF A COUPLING OF CIVILIAN AND MILITARY.

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SEES NO PHYSICAL IMPEDIMENT TO HIS ACTIVE RE-ENTRY INTO POLITICAL LIFE. WE JUDGE FROM THIS THAT HE IS IN BETTER SHAPE THAN SUU.

15. HUONG HAS SOUTHERN AND CATHOLIC SUPPORT. FORMER YOUTH MINISTER VO LONG TRIEU IS HIS "CAMPAIGN MANAGER" AND SOME OF THE OTHER SOUTHERN DISSIDENT MINISTERS PROBABLY FAVOR HIM OVER SUU. IT IS COMMON TALK IN SAIGON THAT HIS RUNNING MATE WILL BE CIVILIAN DIRECTORATE MEMBER PHAN KHOAN. KHOAN IS VNQDD FROM CENTRAL VIET NAM, AND HUONG HAS PROBABLY CHOSEN HIM IN AN EFFORT TO OVERCOME HIS OWN UNPOPULARITY IN CENTRAL VIET NAM. 1-b ed
HE HAS PERSUADED THE MILITANT BUDDHISTS (WHO MIGHT BE EXPECTED TO OPPOSE HUONG BECAUSE OF HIS ACTIONS AGAINST THEM IN THE PAST) TO AT LEAST REMAIN NEUTRAL WITH REGARD TO HUONG'S CANDIDACY. THIS CLAIM MAY TURN OUT TO BE UNTRUE.

16. GENERAL THIEU IS, I BELIEVE, ACCEPTABLE TO A WIDE RANGE OF VIETNAMESE OPINION. THIS DOES NOT MEAN THAT HE NOW HAS OR WILL GET STRONG POSITIVE SUPPORT FROM MANY GROUPS, NOR DOES IT NECESSARILY MEAN THAT HE COULD BUILD SUCH SUPPORT IF HE WERE IN OFFICE. HOWEVER, IT IS TRUE THAT THIEU HAS FEW ENEMIES AMONG THE CIVILIAN POLITICIANS, AND HE COULD GET OFF TO A GOOD START WITH MANY OF THEM. AS CHIEF OF STATE, HE HAS BEEN PROMINENT, YET DIGNIFIED, "TO WHICH THE VIETNAMESE ATTACH IMPORTANCE" WHILE AVOIDING PUBLIC CONNECTION WITH CONTROVERSIAL ISSUES. HE IS GENERALLY NEITHER PRAISED NOR BLAMED FOR PUTTING DOWN THE "STRUGGLE", FOR EXAMPLE. HE IS LESS SUSCEPTIBLE TO REGIONAL PREJUDICE THAN ALMOST ANY OTHER CANDIDATE BECAUSE HIS BIRTHPLACE, PHAN RANG, CAN BE REGARDED AS EITHER CENTRAL OR SOUTHERN (HIS WIFE IS FROM THE SOUTH). SIMILARLY, RELIGIOUS ANTAGONISMS TOUCH HIM LESS THAN MOST CANDIDATES BECAUSE HE IS KNOWN AS A NOMINAL CATHOLIC. THUS, WHILE CATHOLICS DO NOT REGARD HIM AS A GOOD CATHOLIC CANDIDATE, HE IS ACCEPTABLE TO THEM WHILE AT THE SAME TIME HE DOES NOT AUTOMATICALLY ENCOUNTER BUDDHIST RESISTANCE.

17. IN RECENT PUBLIC SPEECHES THIEU HAS BEEN CAREFUL TO EMPHASIZE THE CONTINUING IMPORTANT ROLE OF THE MILITARY UNDER THE FUTURE GOVERNMENT. THIS IS A BID FOR STRONG, POSITIVE SUPPORT FROM THE ARMY, AND HE WILL PROBABLY GET SUCH MILITARY SUPPORT IF HE RUNS. THIS WOULD BE VERY IMPORTANT IN WINNING THE ELECTION AND ALSO IN THE PROPER EMPLOYMENT AND CONTROL OF THE MILITARY AFTER THE NEW GOVERNMENT IS INSTALLED.

18. KY'S SITUATION IS DIFFERENT. WHILE THIEU IS WIDELY ACCEPTABLE BUT GENERATES LITTLE ENTHUSIASM, PEOPLE ARE GENERALLY EITHER POSITIVELY FOR OR AGAINST KY. KY HAS STRONG SUPPORT FROM NORTHERN REFUGEES AND STRONG OPPOSITION FROM A NUMBER OF SOUTHERN POLITICAL GROUPS. HE IS IDENTIFIED WITH THE SUCCESSFUL ACTION

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AGAINST THE "STRUGGLE", AND THOSE WHO OPPOSED THE "STRUGGLE" ARE INCLINED TO SUPPORT HIM. THE AN QUANG MILITANT BUDDHISTS WOULD OPPOSE HIM VIGOROUSLY. (HOWEVER, AS A BUDDHIST, HE WOULD BE QUITE ACCEPTABLE TO THE MAJORITY OF BUDDHISTS WHO DID NOT APPROVE OF TRI QUANG'S EFFORTS TO TOPPLE THE GOVERNMENT.) YOUNG PEOPLE ARE ATTRACTED BY HIS YOUTH AND FLAIR, WHILE THE OLDER GENERATION AND MANY OF THE INTELLECTUALS ARE PUT OFF BY SUCH THINGS AS HIS BLACK FLYING SUIT AND LAVENDER SCARVES. (HOWEVER, HIS RECENT STATESMANLIKE SUCCESS IN AUSTRALIA AND NEW ZEALAND IMPRESSED MANY FORMER CRITICS WHO HAD REGARDED HIM AS TOO YOUNG AND TOO MUCH OF A PLAYBOY TO BE THE PRESIDENT.) HE HAS HAD A PREPOSTEROUSLY AND IRRELEVANTLY BAD PRESS. ALL HITLER-LIKE SLURS ON HIM AS A "DICTATOR" ARE FANTASTIC. HE MOVES BY CONSENSUS AMONG THE DIRECTORATE, DICTATES TO NO ONE.

19. LIKE THIEU, KY COULD COUNT ON STRONG, POSITIVE MILITARY SUPPORT IF HE WERE TO BE THE MILITARY CANDIDATE. THIS IS IMPORTANT.

20. THE ABOVE ESTIMATE OF THIEU AND KY CONCENTRATES ON THEIR ACCEPTABILITY TO FAIRLY WELL DEFINED POLITICAL GROUPS AND LEADERS, MOST OF THEM URBAN BASED. THE ATTITUDE OF THE RURAL MASSES TOWARD KY, THEIU, OR ANY OTHER CANDIDATE IS ESSENTIALLY PASSIVE. WE HOPE THAT THE FUTURE GOVERNMENT WILL BE ABLE TO GENERATE REAL POSITIVE SUPPORT AND PARTICIPATION FROM THE COUNTRYSIDE, BUT THIS HAS NOT YET HAPPENED, AND I DOUBT VERY MUCH THAT ANY CANDIDATE COULD CAUSE IT TO HAPPEN IN TIME FOR THIS ELECTION.

21. THE STARS OF CANDIDATES OTHER THAN HUONG, KY AND THIEU NOW APPEAR TO BE WANING. REMEMBER, HOWEVER, THAT IT MAY BE AS MUCH AS SEVEN OR EIGHT MONTHS BEFORE THE ELECTION. IN THOSE MONTHS WE WILL SEE MUCH MANEUVERING BY ALL WOULD-BE CANDIDATES. THE PUBLIC WILL THINK MORE AND MORE ABOUT THE ELECTION, AND THEIR ATTITUDES SHOULD BEGIN TO EMERGE MORE CLEARLY. BEHIND THE SCENES ALLIANCES WILL BE MADE AND BROKEN. WE MAY BE SURPRISED BY THE EMERGENCE OF OTHER FIGURES WHO ARE NOW QUITE OBSCURE.

22. AS MATTERS NOW STAND, HOWEVER, IT APPEARS THAT THE MOST LIKELY WINNING TICKET WILL BE THIEU OR KY SUPPORTED BY PROMINENT CIVILIANS AS VICE PRESIDENT AND A PRE-DESIGNATED PRIME MINISTER. HUONG'S TICKET IS NOW PURELY CIVILIAN, THOUGH IT IS POSSIBLE HE MAY NAME A MILITARY MAN AS HIS PRIME MINISTER. HUONG'S TICKET IS NOW PURELY CIVILIAN, THOUGH IT IS POSSIBLE HE MAY NAME A MILITARY MAN AS HIS PRIME MINISTER. UNLESS HUONG CHOOSES KY AS HIS PRIME MINISTER DESIGNATE, IT SEEMS TO US THAT HE COULD NOT FORM THE KIND OF MILITARY-CIVILIAN PARTNERSHIP WE HOPE TO SEE. IT WAS IN FACT ALIENATION FROM THE MILITARY THAT WAS IN LARGE MEASURE THE ROOT CAUSE OF THE OVERTHROW OF HUONG'S PREVIOUS REGIME; WE FEAR THAT

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HE COULD NOT EITHER EFFECTIVELY USE OR CONTROL THE MILITARY ESTABLISHMENT AT THIS TIME. MOREOVER, A GOVERNMENT UNDER HUONG WOULD PROBABLY SUFFER FROM THE DISLOCATIONS OF A "CIVILIAN COUP". NOT ONLY WOULD MILITARY SKILLS AND PERSONAL TIES BE LACKING, BUT HUONG'S LONG ABSENCE FROM THE POLITICAL SCENE WOULD MAKE IT NECESSARY FOR HIM TO CONSTRUCT FROM SCRATCH THE NECESSARY PERSONAL RELATIONSHIPS WITH MANY OF THE CIVILIAN POLITICAL ELEMENTS. AS FOR THE POSSIBILITY OF A HUONG-KY TICKET, WE CONSIDER IT UNLIKELY THAT KY WOULD CONSENT TO BE HUONG'S PRIME MINISTER. IF HE DID, HOWEVER, BOTH HUONG AND KY ARE SUCH STRONG FIGURES THAT A DESTRUCTIVE STRUGGLE FOR POWER WOULD BE MORE LIKELY THAN A PRODUCTIVE PARTNERSHIP.

23. THE ABOVE IS BY NO MEANS A FINAL JUDGMENT. WE CONTINUE TO REVISE OUR ANALYSIS AS EVENTS UNFOLD.

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